

August 26, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird today announced plans to appoint a "Blue Ribbon Action Committee" to work on implementation of decisions made by the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary of Defense to achieve improvements in the management of the Department of Defense.

In announcing plans to establish the Blue Ribbon Action Committee, Secretary Laird said:

"It is our objective to make major reductions in overhead staffing throughout the Department. I am convinced that this can be done at the same time we improve our performance. I expect that their action will lead to significant savings in Fiscal Year 1972 and beyond.

"I anticipate that we will make a number of major decisions within the next 30-60 days.

"Dave Packard and I have decided to establish an all-service Blue Ribbon Action Committee to assist us in implementing decisions we make in response to recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel. The establishment of this all-service Action Committee is a part of our program of participatory management.

"It will be the responsibility of the Action Committee, headed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Administration) Robert F. Froehlke, to work with Dave Packard and me to convert selected basic recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel into operation as rapidly as possible. This committee will work out the

details of the implementing orders, directives, and instructions so that there will be no interruption to continue combat readiness of our forces.

"Obviously, it would have been possible for us to have unilaterally taken action in response to the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel's recommendations; but, this is not our approach to management of the Department of Defense.

"From the beginning, we have worked to develop a team effort and to decentralize responsibilities to the maximum extent possible, consistent, of course, with our responsibilities for the direction and control of the Department of Defense.

"Serving with Assistant Secretary Froehlke will be a team of experienced general and flag officers from all four services. There will also be representation from the JCS-Joint Staff and from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

"It is not our intention that this Action Committee will restudy the work that was done by the Fitzhugh Panel. Instead, it will be the mission of the Action Committee to expedite the implementation of decisions as they are made.

"As to specific decisions, I am not prepared today to report any to you, except to express our current thinking that if other proposals made by the Fitzhugh Panel are implemented effectively, it does not, at this time, appear necessary to establish a total of three Deputy Secretaries.

"I can report to you that Dave Packard and I, during recent weeks, have had a number of discussions, individually and collectively, with a broad range of senior civilian and military people throughout the Department of Defense. In these discussions, we have, for example, conferred at some

length with the Service Secretaries, the Service Chiefs and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and we will want to have additional talks as we take action to improve the management of the Department of Defense.

"In conclusion, I want to repeat that this is going to be a team effort, for that is the way Dave Packard and I do business.